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Title: The Minister of Science and Technology and Minister of Earth Sciences made a statement regarding landing of a solar-powered aircraft in Ahmedabad on 10th March, 2015.

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES (DR. HARSH VARDHAN): Respected Madam and hon. Members, I seek your attention for only two or three minutes. I wish to bring to the attention of this august House a development in the world of Science and Technology which is of most profound importance for the future of not only Indian economy and society but also the survival of the human civilization which is threatened by over-exploitation of nature and climate change.

Last night, at 11.24 p.m, Ahmedabad witnessed the historic landing of the world's first solar powered aircraft which began a global tour on Monday, the 11th March, 2015. The aircraft is named as Solar Impulse – II (SI-II). SI-II is capable of flying day and night on only solar power. It is on a mission to spread information about the fantastic possibilities of life free of fossil fuels. Its success will serve to convince all humanity that sun is the supreme source of energy with limitless powers. It is also the major source of power which renews itself everyday and forever.

Hon. Members of the House, as the country's Minister of Science and Technology, I feel it is my honour to congratulate on your behalf and on behalf of everyone else, the scientists, the technicians, publicists and last but not least, the two pilots of SI-II, Mr. Bertrand Piccard and Andre Borschberg for their commitment and dedication to the vision of a cleaner and greener world. I think the entire community of Indian scientists working on the making solar power cheaper and more efficiently are greatly enthused by SI-II's landing in our country. The plane is made entirely of carbon fibre and has a wing span of 226 feet but it weighs only 2.3 tonnes. It is almost as big as an Airbus A-380 which is currently the biggest aircraft powered by fossil fuels but about 250 times lighter. SI-II carries more than 17,000 photo-voltaic cells rated at 66 kilowatts peak. At present, its maximum speed is about 140 kilometres per hour which is as fast as a fighter plane of World War-I.

Madam Speaker, through you, I wish to urge every hon. Member present today to carry the message in grain to the SI-II mission, recognize and celebrate *Surya Shakti* – the power of the sun. The significance of Ahmedabad as choice of first landing in India should not be missed. It is the Capital of Gujarat, the State that has pioneered large scale harnessing and distribution of solar energy for every day use. In 2009, Gujarat became the first State in India and Asia to have established a Department of Climate Change to counter the threat to the planet posed by over-use of fossil fuels.

Shri Narendra Modi Ji, who was then the Chief Minister made the Gujarat Solar Park the largest hub of solar power generation in Asia, currently producing more than 1,000 megawatts. Now, as Prime Minister, Modi Ji has set sights on India generating 100 gigawatts of Solar Power by 2022.

Madam Speaker, I am sure that all those who believe this is impossible will be persuaded otherwise by the presence today in our midst of SI-II and its courageous crew and team members. The SI-II flights landing in India serves to persuade those who still harbour misgivings on the possibilities of solar power.

13.00hrs

This may not result in aircraft companies manufacturing solar based planes overnight but that is bound to happen within the next 10-15 years. But before that we must ensure that coal, oil, wood and all traditional forms of energy for daily needs become history.

I thank the Government of Switzerland and the large number of R&D and business organizations, both Indian and foreign, that have made SI-II possible. The aircraft and its crew are expected to take off to Varanasi on March 15. After that, it will fly to Myanmar and then to China. Its biggest feat would be to cross the Pacific Ocean, to the United States and then the Atlantic Ocean to Europe.

On behalf of the entire scientific community of India and this House, I wish the project all success on behalf of all of you. Thank you.

SHRI JITENDRA CHAUDHURY (TRIPURA EAST): Why should this aircraft not be brought to Delhi? It is because Delhi is the capital of our country. It should be brought here. We should also get the opportunity to see the aircraft. Why is it brought only to Gujarat and Varanasi? What is the significance of that? It should be here in Delhi.